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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000535

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAN COUP SITREP #10 (UNCLASSIFIED) 07/04/09  
AS OF NOON LOCAL (1400 EDT)

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 532 AND OTHERS  
[1](#)B. STATE 69221

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Protests Peaked Friday, Quieter Saturday  
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[1](#)1. (U) All demonstrations have remained peaceful. Today's pro-Zelaya protest, numbering approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people, began at the Pedagogical University, then moved to the Clarion Hotel and onward toward the Supreme Court building. That group, then numbering 10,000, proceeded to Toncontin International Airport, blocking traffic into and out of the airport. Airport officials reported that flight operations were not disrupted, though a small number of passengers did not make their flights. The demonstration disbursed at 1500 local (1700 EST); the demonstrators plan to follow the same path on July 5. A pro-coup rally failed to materialize, possibly to avoid coming into contact and conflict with the pro-Zelaya group. Beyond Tegucigalpa, the Honduran countryside remains largely peaceful with some small, isolated demonstrations on both sides of the issue. In Tegucigalpa, Friday saw the city's largest protests to date, with the pro-coup rally peaking at over 10,000 people and the pro-Zelaya group passing 5,000. By midday July 2, approximately 300 Nicaraguan protesters had blocked the Las Manos border crossing, demonstrating in favor of Zelaya, while approximately 100 Salvadoran protesters did the same at the El Amatillo crossing. Both groups dispersed by mid-afternoon. Honduran Police (HNP) report the El Amatillo protest resumed briefly today, but had ended by 11:00 local. There was no parallel demonstration at Las Manos today. (Note: these protests lend further support to the HNP and de facto regime's claims that the pro-Zelaya movement has a significant foreign element. End note)

[1](#)2. (U) Ironically, at 1500 local, the pro-Zelaya protest group prevented OAS SYG Insulza from entering the OAS Mission for his scheduled meeting with the G-16 international donor group. The same crowd, chanting pro-U.S. slogans, then granted the Ambassador and the other G-16 representatives

safe passage out to join Insulza at a nearby hotel.

¶3. (U) Buildings along the march routes now bear graffiti from both sides, including depictions of de facto president Micheletti with a Hitler moustache, "Pinocheletti," hammer and sickle symbols from one side, and a caricature of Zelaya and his two closest advisors as the Three Stooges from the other.

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Political Developments; Public Opinion  
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¶4. (U) Just after 2100 local (2300 EDT) July 2, the de facto regime announced via television that it renounced Article 21 of the OAS Democratic Charter and was formally removing Honduras from the organization. (Note: USOAS Poloff noted the OAS was unlikely to recognize this move because OAS does not recognize the legitimacy of the de facto regime, and that the process for a member state to exit the OAS takes two years anyway. End note.) Post is preparing talking points for our contacts here stressing the automatic sanctions and other repercussions an OAS suspension will trigger. Regime supporters have generally given the impression they intend to simply weather the storm until November elections with the expectation the elections will be enough to absolve them of sanctions.

¶5. (SBU) Post is adhering to Washington guidance regarding a no-contact policy (Ref B) with the Micheletti regime, while continuing to seek back-channel progress through non-regime contacts.

¶6. (SBU) The Ambassador met with OAS SYG Insulza during the

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SYG's meeting with the G-16, and again at the end of his one-day mission July 3. Insulza expressed disappointment at the response he had received from the Supreme Court and Cardinal Rodriguez, as well as surprise at the strong defiance of many Hondurans in general to the OAS's resolution. Insulza said that Liberal Party presidential candidate Santos and National Party presidential candidate Lobo had not, he believed, been involved in the coup, but were uncertain whether to condemn it. Insulza believed the OAS would vote to expel Honduras on July 4.

¶7. (SBU) The Catholic Church issued a communique this morning which was signed by the Cardinal and all of his bishops that appeared to support the coup. Cardinal Rodriguez called the Ambassador to report that once the communique was released he received a death threat and another threat from the Bloque Popular (a local left-wing organization) to burn down the cathedral. He said that this week the Bloque Popular demonstrators had on three occasions written graffiti and thrown paint on the cathedral walls. He also said that the pro-Zelaya demonstrators were breaking windows and vandalizing cars. He said by contrast the pro-Micheletti group were well behaved and law abiding. The Ambassador repeated his points from an earlier meeting, laying out the U.S. position condemning the coup and supporting the re-establishment of the constitutional order. The Ambassador also mentioned concerns about suppression of civil liberties and press freedoms, but noted that efforts to limit press freedom had declined significantly in the last several days, although some media outlets were practicing self-censorship.

¶8. (SBU) Approximately a dozen members of Congress from the ruling Liberal and leftist opposition Democratic Unification parties held a press conference the evening of July 3 to decry irregularities in the June 28 Congressional action that installed Micheletti as interim president and to label the actions of that day a coup. Some participants in the news conference have contacted the Embassy today through intermediaries to say they feel threatened. Two members of

Congress -- Elvia Argentina Valle (Liberal, Copan) and Carolina Echeverria (Liberal, Gracias a Dios) made similar statements on national radio July 2. At least three other members of Congress told EconCouns they attempted to issue similar statements on local radio stations but were prevented. Echeverria contacted EconCouns today to state that she is receiving threats that her husband will be arrested. She is planning to file a complaint with human rights groups and is debating whether she should assume her seat when Congress resumes session Tuesday.

¶9. (SBU) Post continues also to reach out to NGO and other informal contacts with more direct ties to outlying regions of the country in an effort to gauge public opinion. One NGO with outreach programs in Gracias a Dios, Yoro and poor neighborhoods within Tegucigalpa notes they are hearing an overwhelmingly anti-Zelaya sentiment, though some temper this with concerns over how the coup might affect their daily lives. They also state that people in Gracias a Dios have observed, speaking with a tinge of irony, the presence of prominent Zelaya Administration figures in their long-neglected region. Human rights NGOs continue to report claims that the de facto regime has been disrupting their ability to communicate, and a video of Honduran troops shooting out the tires of a pro-Zelaya indigenous group's buses on June 29 is now circulating on YouTube.

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Diplomatic Status of Other Missions; Assistance Programs  
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¶10. (SBU) Prior to the July 3 meeting with OAS SYG Insulza, the G-16 member country missions discussed their diplomatic posture in Honduras and the current status of their development assistance programs. The Ambassador and USAID

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Country Director attended. The EU has recalled their ambassadors serving in Honduras; the ambassadors from Italy, France and Spain are now in their respective countries. The German representative, however, noted Germany intended to maintain an ambassador in Honduras, though one was not present at the moment. Other European countries continue to maintain their ambassadorial representation from neighboring countries. Other G-16 countries, including Japan and Canada stated they would continue to do the same.

¶11. (SBU) Regarding development assistance, the UN plan is continuing support, though it will increase its focus on human rights issues emanating from the current crisis. EU and other European countries are continuing their development programs for the moment. This includes the bilateral assistance programs of Spain, France, Sweden, Switzerland, and Germany, as well as the EU itself. The one exception is the budget support the EU provides the GOH, which has been suspended. Canada and Japan are also continuing their assistance programs. The World Bank has halted discussions on new loans and activities, but existing activities are continuing. As the inter-American Development Bank is directly tied to the OAS, their representative anticipated a suspension of its activities following Saturday's vote by the OAS on Honduras. The USG initiated a partial suspension of some development activities on July 3. This included some USAID activities that provide technical support to GOH ministries. USAID programs supporting democracy and governance, child survival, HIV/AIDS prevention, and rural development are currently continuing. The posture of most G-16 countries on assistance remains "wait and see."

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Infrastructure and Communications  
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¶12. (U) Toncontin and San Pedro Sula airports remain open for international flights (despite today's demonstration at

Toncontin), and American, Continental and Delta airlines continue to operate flights as usual. TACA continues to have difficulties as a result of an unrelated commercial dispute. As reported previously, some ad hoc roadblocks exist. Land borders remain open to all traffic, save for brief disruptions as noted above. Power, water, telephone, and Internet continue at normal levels. Only pro-Zelaya television channel 36 remains off the air.

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